

Meyers-Sapphire Complex

MT-BDR-002217

Incident Summary

Southern Area Red Team



Southern Area Red Team

Command and General Staff

Incident Commanders:

Mike Dueitt—Southern Area Red Team

Mark Morales- Southern Area Red Team

Kyle Smith (T)—Southern Area Red Team

Safety: Brad Lidell, Michael Cook, Tony Rivers (T) **Information:**

Catherine Hibbard, Bonnie Strawser

Liaison: Paul Stevens, Mike Wright

Field Operations: Dave Walker, Jeremy Brand (T)

Planning Operations: Peter Myers, Jamie Schwartz

Air Operations: Lynne Howard, Brad Bernardy,
Bart Kicklighter (T)

Planning: Marg Olson, Terry Pierce, Jason Braunstien PSC2 (T)

Logistics: Johnny Smith, Rick Barrett (T)

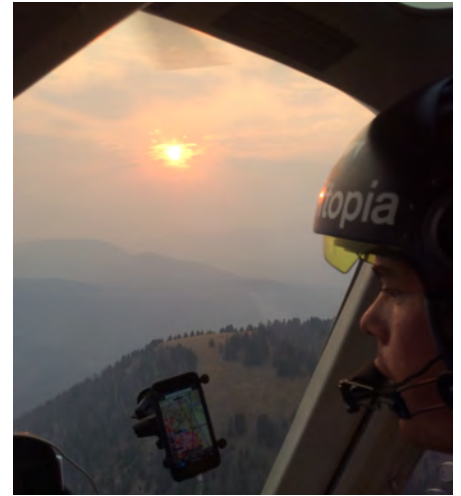
Finance: Bonny Johnson, Sandra Morris



Meyers-Sapphire Complex

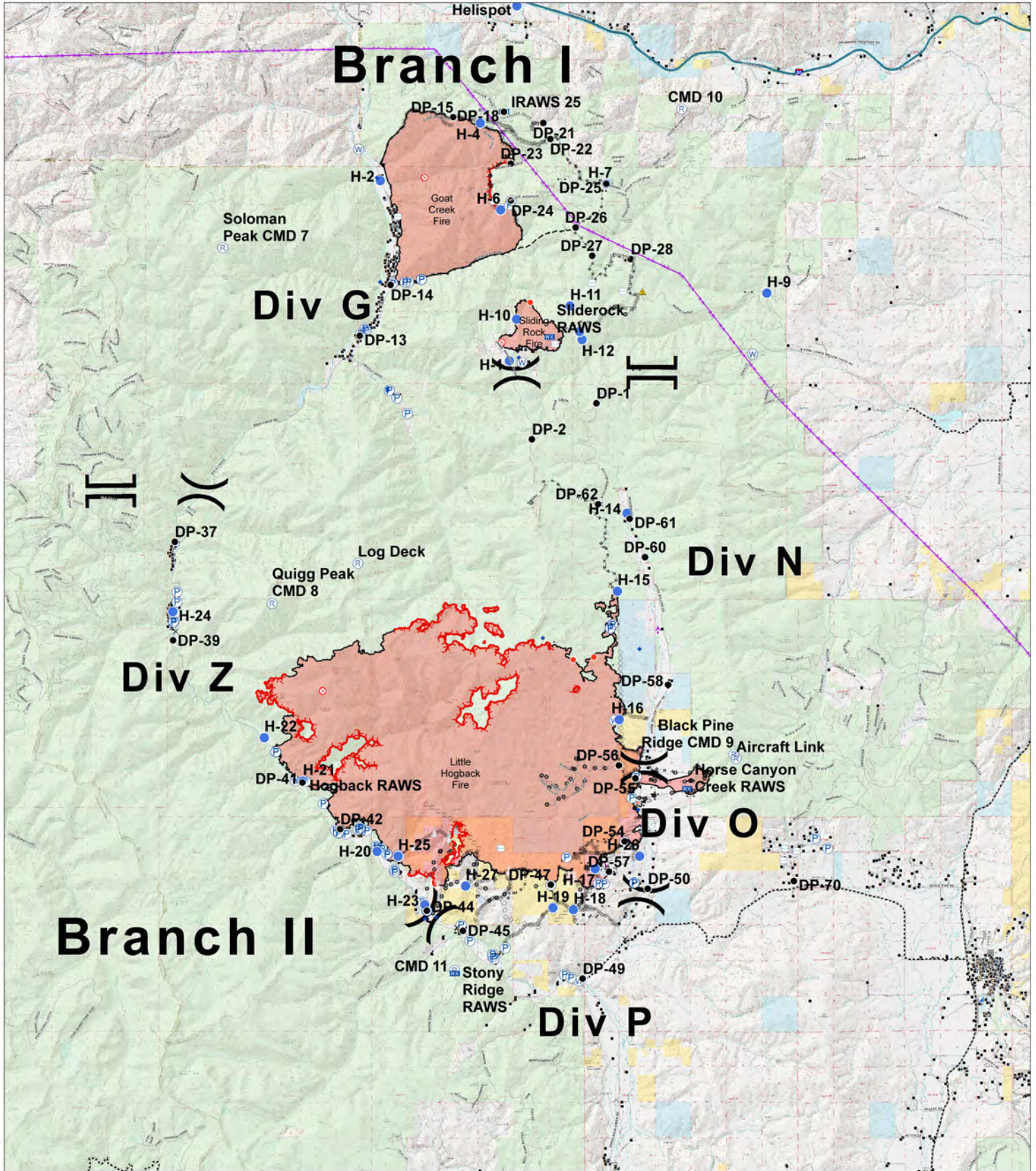
At the peak of the Incident the fire was 105,767 acres. resources assigned included:

- 3 Type 1 crews, 1 Type 2 IA crew, 1 Type 2 crew,
- 6 Helicopters, 39 Engines, 12 Dozers, 16 Skidsteers, 3 Tactical Tenders, 19 Water Tenders, 4 Excavators
- 89 Members of the National Guard
- 233 Operational Overhead
- 330 total trainees, 88 Priority trainees, 12 Southern Area Priority trainees
- 10 Lost Time Injuries
- 90 Visits to the Medical Unit for minor issues
- Total estimated costs for the Meyers fire and the Sapphire Complex are \$67,901,673. Meyers total is \$31,868,369; and Sapphire Complex is \$36,033,304.



After 3 days of staging in Billings, MT, the red team received an order for the Meyers fire. The situation throughout the country was critical with most of the firefighting resources and incident management teams committed. This assignment was the third assignment for the Southern Area Red Team in 2017. The assignment details developed over the next 24 hours to combine the Sapphire Complex with the Meyers Fire; bringing the Lolo, Bitterroot, and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests as well as the BLM and Montana DNRC into one incident under the Area Command umbrella. This required combining two incident command posts and all associated infrastructure. The transition with the two type 2 teams went smoothly and we assumed command at 1800 on September 7, 2017. Fire activity was moderate for most of the assignment with a couple of days of significant growth. The team functions were able to absorb the information from these long-lived fires and successfully work towards the incident objectives and Agency Administrators expectations. Good relationships with all internal and external entities were established and maintained throughout the life of the incident. Resources were shared and released when requested for the greater needs in the area. An extension for the team was granted to stay through September 23rd, if needed, to achieve incident objectives. Smoke resulting from the fires in the west had a significant impact on the residents of Montana. It hampered aerial resources and limited accurate status on several days. A significant change in the weather occurred on September 14th when rain was received over the entire area with some areas getting snow. This improved air quality and created new problems for the team. Keeping firefighters dry and minimizing damage to roads became the new focus. With the change in weather and more rain in the forecast a shift from firefighting to suppression repair and demobilizing resources was sought. All of the supplies, equipment, and personnel that were excess to the suppression repair needs were released. Although this was a stressful and demanding time for the people involved, the Red Team was proud to serve the people of the Northern Rockies.





Meyers Sapphire Complex

MT-BDF-002217

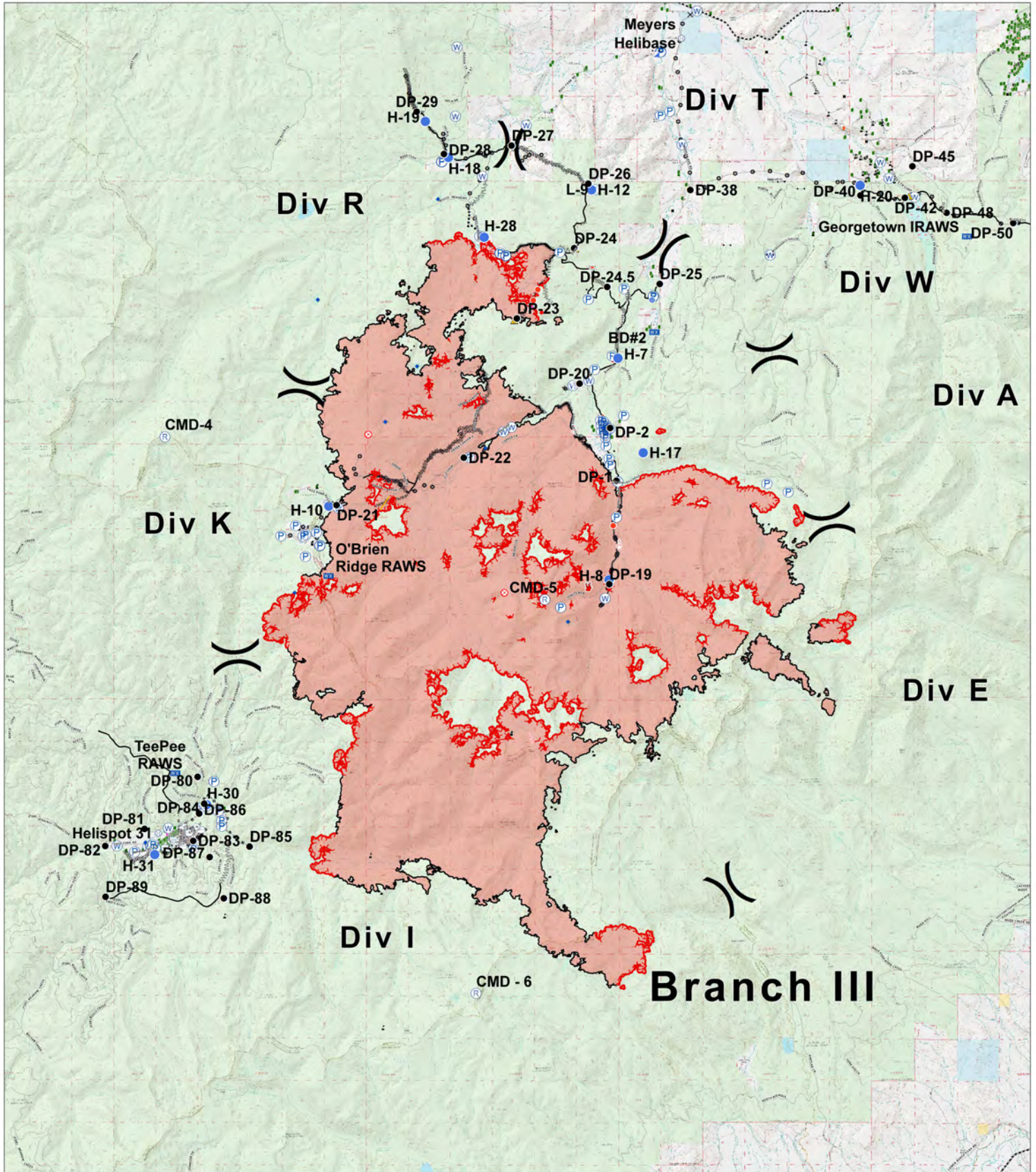
Day Shift

Fire perimeter as of
 09/16/2017 1000
 Slide Rock: 901 ac
 Goat Creek: 8,300 ac
 Little Hogback: 34,552 ac



| | | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Aerial Hazard | Mobile Weather Unit | Value at Risk | Completed Line | Bureau of Land Management | Access Road |
| Camp | Pump | Division Break | Completed Dozer Line | Local Govt | |
| Closure | Repeater | Branch Break | Completed Hand Line | Private | |
| Retardant/Mud Pit | Retardant/Mud Pit | | Road as Completed Line | State | |
| Dip Site | Safety Zone | | AWWWW Line Break Completed | State - FWP/GFP | |
| Drop Point | Sling Site | | Planned Fire Line | USFS | |
| Fire Origin | Spot Fire | | Aerial Retardant Drop | Wildfire Daily Fire Perimeter | |
| Gate | Staging Area | | Aerial Retardant Drop | NHS Interstate | |
| Helispot | Water Source | | Air Tanker Retardant | Primary Road | |
| Hot Spot | Water Tank | | Other | Secondary Road | |
| Incident Command Post | Restricted Water Source | | Unknown | Local Road | |
| Possible IR Heat Source | Uncontrolled Fire Edge | | Structure | RoadCore_FS | |



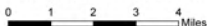


Meyers Sapphire Complex

MT-BDF-002217

Day Shift

Fire perimeter as of
09/16/2017 1000
Meyers: 62,034 ac



| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Camp | Incident Command Post | Value at Risk | Active Burnout | Private |
| Closure | Lookout | Division Break | Completed Burnout | State |
| Dip Site | Mobile Weather Unit | Uncontrolled Fire Edge | Fire Break Planned or Incomplete | USFS |
| Drop Point | Pump | Completed Line | Planned Fire Line | Water |
| Fire Location | Repeater | Completed Dozer Line | Planned Secondary Line | Wildfire Daily Fire Perimeter |
| Fire Origin | Retardant/Mud Pit | Completed Hand Line | Fire Spread Prediction | Primary Road |
| Gate | Safety Zone | Road as Completed Line | Other | Secondary Road |
| Helibase | Spot Fire | MWW: Line Break Completed | Unknown | Local Road |
| Unimproved Landing Area | Water Source | | Single Residence | RoadCore_FS |
| Helispot | Water Tank | | Non Residential Commercial | Access Road |
| Hot Spot | Restricted Water Source | | Other Minor Structure | |
| | | | Bureau of Land Management | |



Meyers-Sapphire Complex Summary

Southern Area Red Incident Management Team

September 8 - 20, 2017

A lightning strike ignited the Meyers Fire on July 14, 2017 at approximately 5:30pm, 25 miles Southwest of Philipsburg, MT. Lightning strikes also ignited the Sliderock Fire and Little Hogback on July 16, 2017. The Goat Creek Fire began on July 23, 2017. On July 25th, the Sliderock, Little Hogback, and Goat Creek Fires were named the Sapphire Complex. The Southern Area Red Team transitioned with the Northern Rockies Incident Management Team (Leach) and the Northern Rockies Incident Management Team (Almas) on September 8, 2017 with a formal transfer of command at 1800 hours.

A total of five Incident Management Teams have assumed command of the Meyers fire to date:

- Northern Rockies IMT1 Turman (July 24-July 31)
- Northern Rockies IMT2 Almas (July 31-August 13)
- Rocky Mountain IMT2 Esperance (August 13-August 26)
- Northern Rockies IMT2 Leach (August 26-September 8)
- Southern Area Red Team IMT1 Dueitt (September 8-September 20)



A total of five Incident Management Teams have assumed command of the Sapphire Complex fire to date:

- Northern Rockies IMT2 Leach (July 16-July 30)
- Northern Rockies IMT2 Thompson (July 30-August 12)
- Northern Rockies IMT2 Pearson (August 12-August 25)
- Northern Rockies IMT2 Almas (August 25-September 8)
- Southern Area Red Team IMT1 Dueitt (September 8 -September 20)



- The Montana Army National Guard was a critical resource in assisting with road and forest closures because we were unable to fill many of our requests for security positions on the Complex.

Operations

- Local fire management officer and duty officer were a source of vital information used throughout the fire during strategic operations.
- Took great care during suppression actions to minimize environmental impacts.
- Maintained good communications with local duty officers on three forests for successful operations that aided in suppressing the Goat, Sliderock, Hogback and Meyers Fires to 95%, 95%, 85% and 90% containment respectively.
- Provided quality training opportunities to 127 trainees.
- Conducted IR flights to determine growth potential and locate heat close to containment lines.
- Used daily recon flights to make successful strategic and tactical decisions.
- Implemented structure protection plans on public, private, and business structures in 9 of 11 divisions on the Complex.
- Air Operations proved to be a safe, efficient, and financially responsible organization.
- From September 7 through September 17, Air Operations flew an 199.4 flight hours, dropped 394,473 gallons of water and moved 1071 pounds of cargo.
- Air Operations experienced two SAFECOMs during the Red Team's tenure: a bucket strike and air intake warning light.
- Air Operations used a total of 6 helicopters, 1 fixed-wing air tactical platforms.
- Mission profiles included air attack, reconnaissance, water delivery and initial attack.



Liaison

- Two liaison officers served the Red Team during this assignment.
- Liaison officers maintained communication and positive working relationships with all adjacent landowners, cooperators, and state and federal partners.
- Special emphasis was placed working with Ravalli County and Granite County Sheriff's in coordinating road and forest closures, pre-evacuations and evacuations.
- The Liaison officers continued the efforts from the past teams in coordinating several biweekly cooperators meetings with the local county commissioners of Ravalli and Granite Counties, as well as assisting with various public meetings with the surrounding communities.

Information

- Experienced a shortage of qualified public information officers due to national preparedness level 5 for wildfires. Most orders were filled with trainees.
- Ensured safety of public information officers on long community contact (“trapline”) routes by pairing them with drivers from Ground Support.
- Provided local residents, absentee owners, and recreationists with evacuation and closure information.
- Staffed a public information officer at the Sula Ranger District to cover information needs on the Bitterroot National Forest.
- Posted information to the Beaverhead-Deerlodge and Lolo National Forest Facebook pages, Inciweb pages for the Meyers Fire and Sapphire Complex, and used Gmail and Mail Chimp to distribute news releases.



Information Statistics

- Posted hugely popular briefings by an Operations Chief daily on Facebook, reaching 20,000 people
- Organized community meetings at Springer Memorial Clubhouse and Wise River Community Center attended by 55 people; attended two other community meetings.
- Staffed a fire information booth at Miners’ Union Celebration visited by 50 people.
- Travelled 320 miles and made 54 stops on traplines each day.
- Developed talking points about the implications of rain and snow on fire behavior that were shared with other fires in the area by Area Command.
- Signed off on PIOF position task books for three trainees and mentored five other trainees.

Safety

- Major hazards were: snags, heavy fuel loading, extreme fire behavior, powerlines, fatigue, wildlife, heavy equipment, steep slopes, rock terrain, cold weather, and driving.
- Public safety was addressed through warning signs, evacuations and road closures when fire and smoke threatened communities.
- Moving heavy equipment to the fires was a challenge for drivers unfamiliar with local roads, bridges and turnarounds. Fortunately, there were no accidents with heavy equipment nor personnel injured while transporting equipment.



Logistics

The ICP was located on the 100 acre property of Robin Bauer under a land use agreement, southeast of Philipsburg, MT. East Fork Spike Camp was established at the end of East Fork Road, Sula, MT. Another spike camp was located at Frog Pond on Forest Service property. A helibase was established near Meyes ICP adjacent to Middle Fork Rd.

- Big Sky Caterer #4 provided 15,000 meals for ICP and spike camps.
- Communications provided centralized communication at ICP through linking repeaters.
- Montana National Guard provided assistance with security for road closures and camp security.



Planning

- One daily operational briefing was conducted by command and general staff.
- US Forest Service regional infrared aircraft imagery was used to track fire spread and develop map perimeters for most operational periods.
- The incident documentation package was transferred to the Lolo and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests. Incident data stored on the incident server was copied to an external hard drive and included in the documentation package.
- The Resources unit used E-ISuite to track all incident resources and to create the Incident Action Plan (IAP).
- All map and IAP products were copied to the NIFC .ftp site. QR codes were included on the cover of the IAP to allow smartphone and tablet users access to the IAP, IR, briefing maps, and tactical maps.
- ArcGIS Collector was used to gather intelligence from field observers and line overhead.
- A total of two incident training specialists for the Red Team assisted 77 trainees during the incident.
- The E-ISuite training module was used with few issues.
- Peak production: Daily unique maps: 137 Total Maps est. 1000 Daily IAP copies at peak: 260



Finance

The flexibility to lend/lease resources between fires allowed for cost effective use of resources.

- The Sliderock cost share direction provided at transition was invaluable in the review and updating of the associated cost groups.
- Differences between cooperator agreements with regard to reimbursable items and reimbursement rates, personnel pay, documentation requirements, and billing processes required additional review and research to ensure the agreements were available and entries into e-ISuite were accurate.
- Guidance from the INBA provided invaluable assistance in resolving claims and managing Land Use Agreements.
- Four Buying Teams provided integral support for all requested supplies and services. Communication and cooperation between the teams was excellent.

